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ON PAGE 7

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
30 September 1984

SPIES OUT IN COLD?

Ron remark on bombing spurs CIA debate

By CHARLES GREEN

Washington—A chance remark by President Reagan to a student last week has led to a fierce debate: Does the United States have all the spies it needs?

Reagan was sharply criticized Thursday by former President Jimmy Carter, a former CIA director and Democratic members of Congress for appearing to shift the blame for last week's bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut to the intelligence policies of the Carter administration.

The controversy was touched off when Reagan, in response to a question about security at U.S. embassies, talked of a need for improved intelligence to guard against attacks. He cited the "near destruction of our intelligence capability in recent years—before we came here," and added that "we're trying to rebuild our intelligence to where you'll find out and know in advance what the target might be and be prepared for it."

Carter issued a statement



Ex-President Jimmy Carter

out of his Atlanta office calling Reagan's statement false and "personally insulting."

STANSFIELD Turner, CIA director under Carter, said Reagan's remarks were "some of the most undignified, unworthy comments from a President I've ever seen... He's had plenty of time to do whatever he wants

to do with the intelligence apparatus."

Turner said the CIA budget, which is classified, had doubled during the Carter administration, and he charged that Reagan was "desperately trying to justify his failures in the midst of an election campaign."

Reagan, meanwhile, said that his remarks Wednesday at a campaign stop in Bowling Green, Ohio, had been "distorted" by the press. He phoned Carter to say he was not blaming his predecessor.

White House spokesman Larry Speakes told reporters that Reagan's remark was intended to emphasize a need for more "human intelligence" capabilities as opposed to electronic intelligence gathering.

PART OF the latest controversy concerning Reagan's remark revolves around personnel cuts made in 1977 by Turner during the first year of the Carter administration.

Turner said he had eliminated 820 positions in response to recommendations by agency professionals dur-

ing the Gerald Ford administration. He said the cuts had been made in the context of reducing staffing levels that had been bloated during the Vietnam War and that they had affected "bureaucratic overhead in Washington" and not "intelligence operations overseas."

The reductions—coming shortly after the CIA had been under attack in Congress for drug experimentation and other highly publicized incidents—were known to cause morale problems for long-time personnel.

Turner said he had felt morale was at its low point when he arrived in 1977 and that support for the CIA was on the upswing by 1978.

Campaigning in Erie, Pa., Vice President Bush said cuts in the "human intelligence side" of the CIA had damaged the agency's intelligence capabilities, and he maintained that the cuts were not reversed until the Reagan administration.